

Committee on Student Affairs

Draft Minutes of the 58th Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs held on 30 Nov 2016 at 3:00pm at Room 7341.

Present : Prof Karl Tsim (Chairman), Prof CY Tsui, Prof Billy So, Prof Lam-Lung Yeung, Prof Shing-yu Leung, Prof Emily Nason, Prof Yongshun Cai, Dr Robert Wessling, Mr Kelvin Cheung, Miss Jasmine Ho, Miss Vanessa Wan, Mrs Pandora Yuen (Member and Secretary)

In Attendance : Mr Jerome Hon (FMO)
Ms Grace Ling, Ms Helen Wong, Ms Daisy Kwan (SAO)

Welcome

1. The Chairman welcomed new faculty and student members, and thanked Mr Jermone Hon for attending the meeting as resource person.

Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting

2. Minutes of the 57th Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs (CSA) was confirmed unanimously.

Matters Arising

3. The demographic data of executive committee members of Student's Union (SU) affiliated societies were prepared and presented as CSA had requested. Data was grouped according to school, year of study, gender and origin (local/ non-local).
4. Members discussed the data and share their observations. It was agreed that some of the issues observed were due to a basket of variants, including historical reasons (changing name of department, the change from a 3-year curriculum to 4-year curriculum in 2012) and structural reasons (different reporting time for students of different origins, recruiting new members during orientation when they have not chosen a major yet).
5. The following suggestions were made to the Students' Union:
 - a. School and Departmental Societies to work closer with School/ Department faculties and supplement departmental initiatives.
 - b. Review their constitutions to address the issue of students from other departments becoming ExCo members of a departmental society.
 - c. Encourage participation of non-local students in school and departmental societies, e.g. designating a non-local student within the ExCo to take care of needs of non-local students within the society.
 - d. Engage more senior students to be leaders of societies.
 - e. Consider holding promotion activities (e.g. O Camp) of departmental society for year 2 students after they have declared major and joined a department.
 - f. DST would like to meet regularly with SU and departmental societies.
6. The Chairman suggested that SU should consider an encouragement system to departmental societies as incentive for them to recruit more non-locals within their ExCo. The SU was to report back. [SU]

Students' Union Proposal for Student Election Campaign (Pro-P)

7. The Chairman briefed new members of the background to Pro-P and an incident last year where conflicts between two house societies went physical on the last day of the chanting period and one group of student reported the case to the Police. The incident was subsequently reported by

the Press. A task force, appointed the then Dean of Students Prof Kar-Yan Tam, was set to address the facts of the incident and recommend preventive measures. One of which was for SU to submit their Proposal for Student Election Campaign for CSA's comment and approval.

8. It was noted that, the Pro-P would normally last for three weeks with promotional booths set up at the Atrium, chanting sessions during lunch and early evening respectively and big decorations on display. Regulatory measures were put in place to address concerns towards safety and nuisance caused to members of the University community. Dr Robert Wessling questioned SU's rationale for attracting negative publicity with the continual running of Pro-P in the current format, which SU explained they would clarify in their presentation.
9. Miss Jasmine Ho and Mr Kelvin Cheung presented SU's proposed arrangement for Pro-P 2017:
 - a. The practice of chanting was mirrored to Haka – the traditional war cry and dance of the Maori people of New Zealand. It was said to build student's sense of belonging to their society and cultivate communication and cooperation of nominated cabinets. Student societies took pride in this practice which was a "unique culture" of HKUST student societies.
 - b. SU's aim this year would be to "minimize the disturbance to other faculty members and [the] general public" whilst maintaining this culture.
 - c. The follow new measures were proposed:
 - Confine chanting to two venues and at specified durations – Atrium and Piazza – with the first session (1-2pm) at the Piazza and the second-session (6-7pm) partly at the Piazza and partly at the Atrium, to alleviate crowdedness at the Atrium during busy lunch hour and reduce noise nuisance.
 - Reschedule the last chanting session to be held at 6-7pm on a Tuesday instead of a Friday to reduce effect and eliminate participation of alumni members for better order.
 - Provide compulsory talk to all nominated cabinets to promote cooperation and collaboration instead of competition.
 - Implement additional rules and regulations, and penalties, e.g. limit budget, SU Court deduction of societies' subsidies and/or suspend affiliation.
10. The Chairman commended SU for the message in minimizing disturbance to the university community.
11. The Chairman invited the view of Mr Jerome Hon in terms of space and safety and the views of the Facilities and Management Office (FMO). Mr Hon indicated:
 - a. It was his first time seeing the proposal, their discussions with SU for Pro-P 2017 was far beyond that being presented.
 - b. FMO had been involved in the Pro-P due to its occupation of publicly access areas of the University (the Atrium) and concerns towards potential liability claims towards the University should accidents happen at the Atrium. There were plentiful records of violations during the Pro-P. FMO had no objection towards Pro-P but was of the view that it need not happen on FMO managed venues, such as the Atrium.
 - c. The proposed layout plan presented was similar to that in previous years. It was almost the maximum capacity of the Atrium.
 - d. Given the plentiful records of violation that called for additional guards to ensure safe and clear passage way, suspension of the escalators due to blockage, over-sized / mobile decorations occupying designated passage way, the Pro-P was a big hazard in the point of general safety and evidential that the agreed procedures did not work out.
12. Members discussed different aspects of the Pro-P, challenged SU to justify it being a culture, and urged SU to consider other ways of conducting the Pro-P e.g. shorten the Pro-P period, innovate the approach, reduce the scale of chanting, spread-out the chanting to reduce the noise level, limit the number of societies chanting at the same time, etc. Ms Grace Ling drew Members' attention to a recommendation of the Task group that last chant should be held in the lunch time session instead of in the evening, and that SU should address this recommendation when revising the proposal. Mr Kelvin Cheung agreed to look into more improvement measures.

(Prof Tsui left the meeting.)

13. Prof Billy So commended SU's effort and suggested them conducting a wider consultation than just students but also consulting general university communities, faculty, staff, residents. Dr Robert Wessling suggested forming an informal committee with professors, administrators, to generate a work plan acceptable to all. Prof Shing-Yu Leung suggested reducing garbage generated and better arrangement for disposal. Prof Yongshun Cai suggested two weeks duration instead of three.
14. The Chairman enquired the views of Miss Vanessa Wan. Miss Wan acknowledged there were varying views amongst students towards Pro-P. Some students were negative towards the regulations imposed by SU seeing it as a form of restriction from the University. From her personal experience, it was a useful tool to help her bond with her student society and where all members could get involved. She suggested more communications between the University and the students.
15. The Chairman suggested SU to discuss within the ExCo and with student societies to revise the proposal for further consideration by CSA. The revised proposal should include a table comparing the proposed arrangement with that last year. [SU]

(Mr Hon was excused from the meeting.)

Changes in University Housing

16. Dr Robert Wessling shared with Members on the proposed formulation of a master plan for university housing for students, in a 1-HKUST approach. Meanwhile, changes were planned for:
 - a. Resident Master (RM) Program – with longer appointment duration, clearer job description and expectations, and stronger support system for collaboration between house societies and RMs.
 - b. New Student Orientation – a more coordinated approach to welcome new students with positive messages.
 - c. First-Year Experience Program in residence – in groups of 12 to 15, new students of diverse background to work with student leaders throughout the year to help with their transition.
17. Members discussed the proposed changes. The Chairman thanked Dr Wessling and invited him to share with CSA again when the plan was finalized.
18. Regarding the overnight voucher program, Mr Kelvin Cheung enquired if the plan would be expanded to other Halls. Dr Wessling commented that an expansion would be viable after checking compliance with building regulations by the Government and other legal terms.

(Prof So left the meeting.)

Report on Student Leaders Program

19. Members received report on the progress of Student Leaders Program (CSA/58/2) from Ms Grace Ling.
20. Members discussed the report. Prof Shing-Yu Leung suggested opening the training to student leaders of non-SU affiliated societies and Prof Nason enquired the possibility for School to nominate students to join. Ms Ling shared that, starting 2015-16, the program had been opened for all students to join. Schools were also welcome to nominate students to join.
21. The Chairman enquired on the background for the external instructors. Ms Ling shared, for example, the instructor on law was a lawyer alumni and the first aid instructor was a doctor from the Civil Aid Society. Instructors were normally sourced from reliable organizations of relevant background.

22. Dr Robert Wessling enquired about the content of the O'Camp briefing. He suggested, instead of purely talking about logistics, rules and regulations, it could be helpful for faculty alumni to share with O'Camp organizers, instilling in them the responsibility of peer educators, and work with them to propagate positive messages to new students. Ms Ling welcomed all suggestions and shall see to refine the next offering in 2017.
23. The Chairman was pleased with the program. Prof Lam-Lung Yeung proposed to accept the report and Prof Emily Nason seconded. The report was endorsed unanimously.

(Ms Grace Ling and Miss Jasmine Ho left the meeting and Ms Helen Wong joined.)

Report on REDbird Awards Program

24. Members received report on the progress of REDbird Awards Program (CSA/58/3) from Ms Helen Wong, giving background and progress of the Program.
25. Prof Shing-Yu Leung enquired the local/ non-local ratio of REDbird participants and the Chairman enquired the breakdown by gender. Ms Wong noted that, for 2015-16, the ratio for Local: Mainland: International was 44:23:33 and breakdown by gender was similar to that of the University. The Chairman enquired on funding source of the program and was happy that the program had been regularized into the recurrent offering of the Student Affairs Office.
26. Dr Robert Wessling thought that it was a great program but shared his concern that with only years one and two students actively participating in the program, it seemed to add to the myth that students cannot continue to be student leaders in years three and four. Dr Wessling suggested expanding the program into year three, e.g. through offering mentorship via the REDbird Program to student leaders. This would require student's interest and their desire to take up leadership in years three and four, and the same applied for SU leadership. The Chairman agreed to leave the door open.
27. Ms Wong shared there was an ongoing REDbird alumni group, where REDbird leaders graduated from the program but in years three and four remained active to share their experience with years one and two participants through peer-to-peer sharing. A recent session featured Prof King Chow sharing happiness and some year four REDbird alumni also joined to share personal experience.
28. Ms Wong further shared the history of the program, which was established some 10 years ago as a 3-year program. It was hard to retain students through the three years because students were swamped with opportunities. Based on student feedback and reality, the program was refined to 1+1 to better fit student's schedule and avoid competition with Schools. Nonetheless, Schools would be informed of their list of REDbird participants and would consider working with these trained leaders in the School activities. The program was due to be reviewed again this year, and CSA comments would be taken to formulate changes.
29. There being no other suggestions, Prof Emily Nason proposed to accept the report and Prof Shing-Yu Leung seconded. The report was endorsed unanimously.

Report on HKUST Connect

30. Members received report on the progress of HKUST Connect (CSA/58/4) from Ms Helen Wong.
31. The Chairman enquired the nature of partnership and if there were partnerships with secondary schools and suggested exploring leveraging on this to help with University recruitment. Ms Wong shared current partnerships were done through NGOs and not directly with secondary or primary schools.

32. Prof Nason enquired about the rate and level of commitment of the civic fellowship program and the public leadership program. Helen shared that it was donor's requirement for the public leadership program. The Chairman enquired on program evaluation and Ms Wong reported that data was generally positive for structured service learning opportunities, where for some activities, students were required to submit reflective journal for their learning.
33. Mr Kelvin Cheung expressed he was initially confused that HKUST Connect was a student body and suggested clearer promotions to the difference. Miss Vanessa Wan shared she was a civic fellow and was caught surprised with no seat and no work on the first two weeks working for an NGO. She suggested HKUST Connect to better prepare students for the gap. Ms Wong noted the comments and shared that partnership with NGOs would be evaluated based on student feedback. In reality, many NGOs worked with very limited resources and it was understandable that at times the program may not be as well-structured.
34. There being no other suggestions, Prof Shing-Yu Leung proposed to accept the report and Prof Emily Nason seconded. The report was endorsed unanimously.

(Ms Wong left the meeting.)

Any Other Business

35. There were no other business.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50pm.